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Use nature to fight climate change – IUCN

Poznań, Poland, Monday, December 1, 2008 (IUCN) – Countries should use their natural resources to fight climate change, according to IUCN.

Protecting natural resources, such as forests, rivers and mangroves, enhances the ability to cope with changes that are already happening as a result of global warming.

“Governments are once again coming together in Poznan to deal with the climate crisis, but they are running out of time,” says IUCN Director General Julia Marton-Lefèvre. “We need to make substantial progress at Poznan to achieve a credible and efficient post 2012 climate change agreement by Copenhagen in 2009.”

The deadline for setting serious cuts in emissions is fast approaching. Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) in developing countries, which promotes the protection and planting of forests, is one of the most immediate and cost effective ways to reduce carbon emissions.

“Forests have the potential to be one of the best means to help slow the rate of global warming,” says Stewart Maginnis, Head of IUCN’s Forest Conservation Programme. “But for REDD to be included in the post-2012 climate change framework, it will also be important for countries to identify and deal with the underlying causes of deforestation. This will include enhancing good governance, involving local communities and respecting indigenous people’s rights.”

Despite the fact developing countries produce less greenhouse gases per capita, they will suffer most from the impacts of climate change. The poor and vulnerable will be particularly hard-hit by increased drought, flooding, less food, fuel, medicines and building materials. Discussions in Poznan need to progress on helping people adjust to a changing climate. Nature already has many of the solutions.

“It’s often better to use mangroves, for example, to guard coastal communities against extreme weather events than a sea wall because mangroves do more than protect the coastline,” says Neville Ash, Head of IUCN’s Ecosystem Management Programme. “They provide means for people to make a living, they are a home for many important species and – best of all – they already exist. We just need to recognize their value and manage them better.”

IUCN demands that the roadblocks to a meaningful agreement on fighting climate change are removed, especially given the climate agenda of the newly elected US government.

“Developed countries signing up to reduce emissions by 80 to 95 percent below 1990 levels by 2050 is a promise for the too distant future,” says Ninni Ikkala, IUCN Climate Change Officer. “We want to see concrete commitments to reduce those levels by 25 to 40 percent by 2020.”

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About IUCN

IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges by supporting scientific research; managing field projects all over the world; and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN, international conventions and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.

The world's oldest and largest global environmental network, IUCN is a democratic membership union with more than 1,000 government and NGO member organizations, and almost 11,000 volunteer scientists and experts in some 160 countries. IUCN's work is supported by over 1,000 professional staff in 60 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world. IUCN's headquarters are located in Gland, near Geneva, in Switzerland. www.iucn.org